



YOUR LETTERS

MAILBOX

You think you've got problems, with your spyware-infected PCs, Registry errors and malfunctioning projectors? At least you haven't resorted to eating packaging materials like we have

★ Fool Google to get a cool email address



Google's web-based email service is very popular, and having an @gmail.com address is cool. But it's no longer possible to get a new @gmail.com address if you are in the UK or Germany because the term 'Gmail' is a registered trademark that does not belong to Google. Instead, new British and German users get the longer and less desirable '@googlemail.com' style of address. If you already have an @gmail.com address in the UK it will still work, but you can't get a new one. Or can you?

There is a way, even if you are UK-based. First, you need to get a copy of XeroBank Browser (www.xerobank.com), a modified Windows version of the Firefox web browser that uses The Onion Router (TOR) network. This is a network of anonymous servers that allow you to make a connection to a computer on the internet in such a way that the original address of your computer is not available. See <http://tor.eff.org> for full details.

The important point is that, while you are using XeroBank Browser, web servers that you visit probably don't know that you are in the UK. So, if you go to the Google page to register a new email account, you have a good chance of seeing @gmail.com at the end of the Desired Login name option. If you try this and still see @googlemail.com then it probably means the TOR network you are currently connected to ends in the UK or Germany. If this is the case, just close XeroBank Browser and reload it. You will be put on to a new TOR network, which may end in a different country.

If at any time you want to see where your current TOR network ends, just go to the webpage at www.whatismyipaddress.com and you will be shown a map of where the rest of the internet thinks you are located.

Once you have registered your new Gmail address, you can revert to using your normal web browser to access your Gmail email.

Rob Purvis

That's a very clever and handy tip, albeit one that contravenes at least two of Gmail's basic terms and conditions. Because of this there is no way that we can condone any reader using Rob's ingenious technique for acquiring the much sought-after @gmail.com suffix. However, his letter is an interesting demonstration of how it is possible to use anonymising services to fake online identities. And to get a cool email address.



▲ Visit whatismyipaddress.com to see the location that you appear to be connecting from

CONTACT US

LETTERS PAGE

letters@computershopper.co.uk

TECHNICAL ADVICE

helpfile@computershopper.co.uk
softwarehelp@computershopper.co.uk
businesshelp@computershopper.co.uk

BUYING ADVICE

buyinghelp@computershopper.co.uk

COVER DISC ENQUIRIES

coverdiscs@computershopper.co.uk

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES

compshopper@servicehelpline.co.uk
 or call 0845 126 0389
 or visit www.subsinfo.co.uk

OTHER ENQUIRIES

enquiries@computershopper.co.uk

WRITE TO US AT

Computer Shopper,
 30 Cleveland Street,
 London W1T 4JD

PRE-INSTALLED ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE



I was watching a shopping channel on TV the other night because it was the PC hour. Dell was selling a desktop and laptop, and was going through what software it had pre-installed. When it came to internet security software it said that a three-year subscription to McAfee's SecurityCenter software was included. I dug out the April issue of *Shopper* and, lo and behold, McAfee came near the bottom of the anti-virus products you tested. That got me thinking, so I checked through *Shopper*, looking at the PC vendors and the software they provide. It makes grim reading. Dell uses McAfee SecurityCenter, Mesh and Evesham provide Bullguard Internet Security, Acer and Fujitsu install Norton Internet Security and Sony protects its PCs with Norton Internet Security 2007. Finally, while not a PC vendor, Sky offers McAfee software, too.

I have a magazine from the States that tested internet security software and came up with very

different results from yours. For example, it recommended Norton Internet Security, which you did not. But if you can pick holes in the security software that misses viruses, then the bad guys can, too. However you tested them must be better than the reviewers who gave them high scores of detection.

Paul Smith

As far as we know, we are the only computer magazine to have its own dedicated anti-virus testing lab. This allows us to install anti-virus software on test PCs that are held in a secure area, away from other computers, and to download the very latest internet threats to their hard disks. By attempting to infect these PCs we can get a fairly accurate picture of how today's anti-virus programs handle the current viruses and other malware that are doing the rounds. You can see a photo of the test systems in action (above right).

The three most popular anti-virus brands in the world are Symantec (Norton), McAfee and Trend Micro.



▲ Shopper's anti-virus testing area. Man in protective white suit and goggles not pictured

As you've noticed, our tests indicate that the anti-virus products we've seen from these companies are not the best available. The reasons that PC vendors opt for these over less well-known products range from competitive pricing to the strength of the brand. For example, regardless of our test results, the Norton and McAfee brands are well known and trusted in the UK and the US. Trend Micro is big in Australia and the Far East.

The best anti-virus products we've seen come from companies such as Kaspersky, Steganos and Eset. However, most PC buyers will not recognise these names, and this lack of familiarity puts off PC manufacturers from including them. It is up to you and other buyers to demand alternatives. The manufacturers will provide what the majority wants. For example, this month Dell has announced that it will provide some PCs with Linux pre-installed, rather than Windows. That is a much more significant move than changing from McAfee to Kaspersky, and it came about because customers demanded it.

SPYWARE SCARE

My computer is becoming increasingly slow to start. Some of the programs in MSConfig's Startup list may be unwanted rubbish, but how can I identify what can be unticked or deleted safely? I use Windows XP Home with McAfee SecurityCenter and Ad-Aware. I also have Windows 98 SE on a separate computer, which has AVG Anti-Virus Free and Ad-Aware. Both are increasingly slow to start.

I am also concerned about keyloggers, which I am told could be undetected by anti-virus and anti-spyware utilities. How can these be identified and removed?

Paul Bole

PCs slow down as you use them for a number of reasons. Installing new software, updating security software and even creating lots of small files can degrade performance. Checking your system's virtual memory settings may help. Windows XP really needs 512MB of RAM to run fast, and 766MB is a sensible minimum size for

its swap file. We published details on optimising your swap file in *Helpfile* last month. You can untick items in MSConfig and restart to see if your PC works OK. Doing so should not cause unrecoverable problems. However, it is possible that you might disable your anti-virus or firewall software and, if the system already has a virus or spyware, lowering your defences is not a good idea. If you want to be extra sure before disabling items, check the names of the entries on a site such as www.pacs-portal.co.uk/startup_index.htm.

A sudden significant drop in performance can be a sign that spyware has infected your system. As we've seen in this month's anti-spyware Labs test on page 119, not all anti-spyware programs are effective. The free version of Ad-Aware is useless for preventing a spyware infection. It is really only suitable for attempting to clean up afterwards. It should detect some keyloggers, as should McAfee SecurityCenter. However, as Paul Smith notes above, anti-virus programs also differ in their ability to detect malware. Our results class McAfee's anti-virus scanner as being below average. We recommend you invest in a copy of Steganos AntiVirus 2007.

EDWARDS: WRONG AGAIN



Simon Edwards' Rant ('Not mush on the telly', *Shopper*, June 2007) was totally wrong in its premise.

The problem with TV today is not that new programmes are spread around hundreds of channels. Most channels do not make programmes; they buy in whatever is on the market. The real problem is that there are too few entrepreneurs in television. We no longer have the Lew Grades to take risks and back gut instinct rather than listen to focus groups and stare at ratings.

And the same is, perhaps, true of the world of computing. Where are the men of vision who spot the opportunities and give the public what they want, even if the public doesn't know it wants it?

On 12th August, 1981 IBM launched the first personal computer. Surprisingly, the then-foremost company in computing did not write the operating system that would make it work. It bought it from two young men, Bill Gates and Paul Allen, who ran a small company called Microsoft. They in turn had themselves licensed the code from another small company

in Seattle. Gates and Allen tweaked it slightly and rebadged it as PC-DOS before selling it to IBM. Their entrepreneurship shows in the way they did not give IBM exclusivity. Instead, they did a deal that allowed them to market the system under the name MS-DOS.

Microsoft went on to develop Windows, but it was not the first to have that idea; the Xerox Alto computer had the first real graphical user interface, which is what Windows actually is. Microsoft was not even the first to put a GUI into a personal computer, as Apple had done it two years earlier with Lisa.

But Microsoft was the victor not least because its founders were, and are, entrepreneurs, even if you do not agree with their methods. Its software is not necessarily the best around, but it persuaded most of us that it meets our needs.

So where is the next major breakthrough going to come from? It isn't Linux, because entrepreneurs didn't get their hands on it soon enough to turn it into the world-dominating system it might have been. So is there a man or woman sitting in a darkened room somewhere in the world, writing their 49 millionth line of code that will one day revolutionise the world? And is he or she working under someone who can see the opportunities and do what it takes to turn the work into a worldwide success?

Sadly, there are no obvious candidates, and neither are there in television, unless Michael Grade has something up his sleeve. But let's hope I am wrong and the Lew Grade of computing is about to reveal himself and astound us. And Michael, we are watching ITV closely, although perhaps Simon Edwards has already given up.

Mike Ward

Simon Edwards writes: You are probably right. After all, the original article confessed that "this entire rant is based on what I think, rather than anything so pedestrian as proper, established fact". However, my point wasn't that content was stretched too thinly across multiple channels (even though I reckon, in a reasonably uninformed way, that it is), but rather that due to the extra digital channels there is more rubbish than there used to be and that all the reasonably good stuff is scheduled for 3am.



WRITE IN AND WIN!

Everyone runs out of disk space sooner or later. One way to solve the problem is to send us a great letter. That's because Western Digital has kindly agreed to furnish our Star Letter writers with an award-winning 500GB My Book Pro Edition hard disk. This external drive connects using USB2 or FireWire. It supports both FireWire 400 and 800, and can transfer data twice as fast as some other external disks we've tested. Honoured with *Shopper's* Best Buy award in the January 2007 issue, this sleek-looking unit comes complete with Retrospect backup software and even has an LED indicator on the front to display how much free disk space remains.



PLUS!

Every published letter-writer who provides their address also receives a *Computer Shopper* mug



**STAR
PRIZE
WORTH
£150**



It's also worth bearing in mind that you and I are probably not the target audience for mainstream products such as *Desperate Wife Swap* or *The Shamelessly Vain and Untalented Factor*. Recently Channel 4's deputy chairman admitted that he was not proud of *Big Brother* but that, until he could find something else that generated 15 per cent of Channel 4's income, it would stay. And while it does, I'll grumble on and pretend not to watch it.

SPRING CLEAN



I thought it was time to clean out the cobwebs and get my old computer up and running as new.

My first thought was to clean out the Registry, so I installed a Registry cleaner that was thoughtfully supplied on *Shopper's* cover DVD.

On running the program, it found 365 errors within the Windows XP Registry and informed me that, as the program was a trial version, it would fix 10 errors now but I would need to buy the product to fix the others. However, I discovered that the program fixes 10 errors every time, so by rescanning I eventually fixed all the errors. During the next 30 days of the trial, I rescanned the Registry with, at most, two new errors being found.

Then an email arrived that offered a special deal on another Registry-fixing program, so I thought I'd give it a try. First I checked that no errors were present using the already installed program, then I installed the alternative product. On scanning my PC it discovered 410 Registry errors but, being a trial installation, it would fix only 15 unless I bought a licence.

Now maybe I'm an old sceptic, but both programs found a large number of errors, and both would fix only a very small number of these errors unless I made a purchase.

Stewart Pearl

The Registry is a complicated database of settings that grows every time you install new software. As you add and remove programs, the chances are that some unnecessary entries will be left in place. The number of Registry entries is simply massive, which means that fixing all possible problems manually is inconceivable and the chances of any one program finding them all is unlikely.

It's worth considering whether or not attempting to do so is worth the trouble. In the June issue of *Shopper* we looked at different ways to increase your PC's speed. The 'PC Pitstop' feature included a section on the Registry, and we said that the orphan entries in the Registry won't usually cause major problems but they can cause slowdowns and occasional odd behaviour. If you have a noticeable problem, then cleaning your Registry may help.

We recommend using a free Registry scanner called CCleaner (www.ccleaner.com). This will fix any problems it finds, although any program will find it a challenge to identify every single one of the unnecessary settings in the Registry file.

PROJECTING PROBLEMS



Until Windows Vista came along, I would have considered myself a bit of a PC expert. But now I have a problem getting my new Advent 7113 notebook working with an NEC VT770

projector. This projector is hanging from our very high church ceiling. The irony is that a much older laptop, which I personally upgraded to Vista, works perfectly well with the projector. The new laptop also works perfectly well with a much older, portable and less powerful projector, but not with the more powerful, more recent machine installed two years ago at the church. What I get is a black projection on the church screen and the desktop wallpaper alone on the laptop screen.

I have done all the obvious adjustments that can be made in Control Panel, under headings such as Mobile PC, Appearance and Presentation, including changing the resolution, extending the desktop left and right, duplicating it and attempting to display it on the projected screen alone.

I have now concluded there just isn't anything more I can adjust with the notebook. What have I missed? It is so infuriating that the older laptop does the job for typical PowerPoint presentations, as does any Windows XP machine, including my daughter's old discarded desktop PC.

Stewart Jones

It is possible that your settings are now in a muddle, so start off by removing the projector as a secondary display. A secondary display is useful if you want to work with two monitors side by side, but you should probably avoid the Windows options that allow this if you want to use a projector. If you do want to use the projector as an extension of your desktop, ensure that it is display number two and that the box called Extend This Display is ticked.

COMPUTER SHOPPER

SHOPPER OFFICE

Editor Paul Sanders
paul@computershopper.co.uk
 Deputy Editor David Ludlow
david@computershopper.co.uk
 Technical Editor Simon Edwards
simon@computershopper.co.uk
 Commissioning Editor Lynley Oram
lynley@computershopper.co.uk
 Admin Assistant Nicola Gibson
 020 7907 6270
 News Editor Paul Nesbitt
news@computershopper.co.uk

PRODUCTION

Managing Editor Steve Haines
 Production Editor Janey Goulding
 Sub-Editor Amy Micklewright
 Art Editor Colin Mackleworth
 Designer Anand Parmar
 Group Art Editor Bill Bagnall

SHOPPER LABS

Labs Editor Tom Royal
tom@computershopper.co.uk
 Senior Staff Writer Simon Handby
simonh@computershopper.co.uk
 Senior Staff Writer Chris Finnermore
chris@computershopper.co.uk
 Senior Staff Writer Seth Barton
seth@computershopper.co.uk
 Staff Writer Alan Lu
alan@computershopper.co.uk

ADVERTISING

Fax 020 7907 6600
 Email ads.shopper@dennis.co.uk
 Advertising Director
 Jonathan Kitchen 020 7907 6616
 Group Advertising Manager
 Richard Bennett 020 7907 6640
 Deputy Advertising Manager
 Karren Cook 020 7907 6642
 Senior Sales Executive
 Giulia Di Cesare 020 7907 6620
 Senior Classified Sales Executive
 Adam Willbourn 020 7907 6621
 New Media Director
 Dan Newman 020 7907 6803
 New Media Account Manager
 Gary Rayneau 020 7907 6812
 List Rental Nerys Church 020 7907 6140

ADVERTISING PRODUCTION

Fax 020 7907 6066
 Production Director Robin Ryan
 020 7907 6052
 Production Executive
 Lawrence Brookes 020 7907 6062

COVER CD/DVD CONTACTS

Luke Walker 020 7907 6330
 Graham Smith 020 7907 6335

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Tel 0845 126 0389
 Fax 0870 220 0290
 Email compshopper@servicehelpline.co.uk

CONTRIBUTORS

contributors@computershopper.co.uk
 Jennifer Bagley, Adam Banks, David Bayon,
 Mike Bedford, Mel Croucher, Kay Ewbank,
 Dan Goscomb, Mike James, Gordon Laing,
 Rod Lawton, Alec Meer, Paul Mullen,
 Christopher Phin, Ben Pitt, Kevin Pocock,
 David Robinson, Jon Thompson,
 Alex Watson, Clive Webster, Karl Wright

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jamie McGovern, Alessandra Chila and
 Linda Duong

MARKETING

Marketing Manager Claire Childs
 Competitions Manager Emma Winfield
 020 7907 6260
 Marketing Production Controller
 Kerry Lambird

MANAGEMENT

Tel 020 7907 6000
 Publishing Director John Garewal
 Group Advertising Director
 Julian Lloyd-Evans
 Circulation Director Martin Belson
 Finance Director Brett Reynolds
 Group Finance Director Ian Leggett
 Chief Executive James Tye
 Chairman Felix Dennis

PRINTING

Printed by BGP, Bicester, Oxon
 Distributors Seymour 020 7396 8000

PRODUCTS & EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

Computer Shopper welcomes all information on new and upgraded products for possible coverage within the news and reviews pages. However, the publisher respectfully points out that the magazine is not obliged to either review or return unsolicited products.

The Editor is always pleased to receive ideas for articles, preferably sent first in outline form, with details of the author's background and, where available, samples of previously published work. We cannot, however, accept responsibility for unsolicited copy and it may take time for us to reply.

PERMISSIONS

Material may not be reproduced in any form without the written consent of the publisher. Please address such requests to: John Garewal, Computer Shopper, Dennis Publishing, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD

REPRINTS

Computer Shopper operates an efficient commercial reprints service. For details contact: 020 7907 6620

INTERNATIONAL LICENSING

Computer Shopper is available for licensing overseas. For details contact: International Licensing Director Richard Bean, tel. 00 44 20 7907 6136, email licensedir@dennis.co.uk

LIABILITY

While every care was taken preparing this magazine, the publishers cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information or any consequence arising from it. All judgements are based on equipment available to Computer Shopper at the time of review. 'Value for money' comments are based on UK prices at time of review. Computer Shopper takes no responsibility for the content of external websites whose addresses are published in the magazine.

COMPUTER SHOPPER INCORPORATES UPGRADE SHOPPER, GAMES SHOPPER, INTERNET SHOPPER, MOBILE SHOPPER, PC SHOPPER, PORTABLE SHOPPER AND SOFTWARE SHOPPER

ABC 83,390 (average monthly sales Jan-Dec 2006)

A DENNIS PUBLICATION

Computer Shopper is published monthly by Dennis Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD. Company registered in England. All material © Dennis Publishing Limited licensed by Felden 2007, and may not be reproduced in whole or part without the consent of the publishers.

ISSN 0955-8578



In fact, it may not be a Windows setting that is preventing you from using the projector. Most laptops have a button on the keyboard that switches the video output from the LCD screen to an external source connected to the VGA or S-video port. On the Advent 7113 model, press the Fn and F4 keys simultaneously. This will cycle between LCD; VGA; LCD and VGA; and TV modes.

NEC has another suggestion. Simeon Joseph, product marketing manager for NEC Display Solutions, suggests: "It sounds like the cable length connecting the new laptop and VT770 is the issue. To test this theory and verify the cause of the problem, I suggest somehow connecting the new laptop to the VT770 with a shorter, standard cable approximately 2m long, bypassing the existing length of cable used for the installation, as we do not generally expect a laptop's signal to be maintained over 10m without additional video signal amplification.

"The strength of the new laptop's graphics output may not be enough to ensure that the signal quality is maintained over the long cable necessary for your church's very high ceiling. This could also explain why the laptop works with the portable projector. You could buy a video amplifier to address this.

"As for the old laptop working with the VT770, it sounds like you have just been fortunate that it produced acceptable results."

MICRO MEMORY IN MAXI PACKING



This hardly believable photo (right) shows all the packaging recently used by Amazon to send me a single SD card. Although the item is no bigger and not much thicker or heavier than a

postage stamp, I was charged over £3 including VAT just for the postage and packing.

Terry Weston

We have had similar experiences when buying memory cards from Amazon and other online retailers. It's hardly a green approach to mail order. But if you think that this is an example of environmental insanity, consider the journey that a massive truck may have made to deliver the tiny item.

We've had good packaging experiences, too, though. We had review equipment arrive packed in popcorn as well as something that closely resembled Wotsits in both appearance and (we're ashamed to admit to knowing) taste.

Have other readers received ridiculous, environmentally careless packaging? Or brilliantly clever and Earth-friendly parcels? Let us know and we'll feature the best photos on this page. If the packaging was edible, please provide details of its taste and any undesirable after-effects. 



▲ Amazon demonstrates its policy of sending enormous boxes of fresh air to its customers

Advertisers' index

1&1	77-78
123 Reg	49
Aspect	206
AVG	8
CCL	205
CET	75
Choice	85
Cube	67-69
Cyberpower	76
D-link	21
Dabs	33
Dell	2-5
Ebuyer	92
Enermax	45
Evesham	97-101
Fasthost	86
FSP	107
Komplett	19
Linksys	82
Mesh Computers	59-61
Oyyy.co.uk	93
PC Nextday	104
PC Specialist	64-65
Printerbase	94
Samsung	89
Time	132, 137
Xerox UK	19

Classified index

247 ink	199
Abel Gratis	197
Cartridge Express	197
Data Track	197
Dataquest International	197
Eoutlet	197
ImageTek	198
Ink Prices	197
Inkwell	197
KJ Global	199
Manx	200
Mx2	198
Picstop	200
www.computerbattery.co.uk	198
Xtra Soft	200

NEXT MONTH IN

COMPUTER SHOPPER

External Hard Disks

We test 12 desktop and pocket-sized disks from 24p per gigabyte

Affordable Gaming PCs

You don't have to spend a fortune to enjoy top-notch gaming.

We test nine £799 systems

The Best of Web 2.0

If you still think Google is pretty cool, you need to read our round-up of the latest web wonders

Budget Camera Megatest

Don't miss our exhaustive round-up of bargain snappers

Make Memories Digital

Transform dusty video tapes into dynamic, digitally enhanced masterpieces.

PLUS: Comprehensive flatbed scanner Labs test

Uninterruptible Power Supplies

Protect your PC from power failures and surges with a low-cost UPS

Slipstreaming

Create custom Windows install disks for easy reinstallation

On sale at all good newsagents from 19th July 2007